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United Israel Appeal. "Report of Activities of Citizens'  
Development Councils." 1972.

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File

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES OF CITIZENS' DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS

A. General

Since December 1970, the coordinator of the project, Mr. Moshe Arnon, has been incapacitated, and therefore the full weight of coordination activities fell upon the undersigned, who is employed in this capacity on a part-time basis only.

Although this did not lead to dissolution of the councils, or even to serious disruption of their activities, it became impossible to extend and intensify the coordinator's guidance to the executive members of the councils, in the promotion campaigns necessary for the financing of new projects.

Thus, Moshe Arnon's absence was particularly felt in Beth Shemesh, where the Council was to function this year for the first time without an operational budget from the Jewish Agency.

After the first six months of Mr. Arnon's illness, it was evident that he would be unable to resume work for a long time; this was repeatedly brought to the attention of the officials in charge of the project at the Jewish Agency.

However, no steps have been taken to date to ensure the continuity of the programme. Since Mr. Arnon's illness, the Jewish Agency has not assigned even one working day for the coordination and guidance of the councils; if the work was carried on at all, it is only due to the good offices of the United Israel Appeal, Inc. in Jerusalem, which consented to extend its assistance - initially conceived for a limited running-in period during the experimental stages of the project - by further extending the part-time employment of the undersigned.

B. Beth Shemesh

At the beginning of 1971, the Beth Shemesh Development Council was at the peak of its efficiency and was on the point of extending its activity to a number of projects conceived by the Council itself, and to be carried out jointly with other agencies, over and above the budget requested for the current year from the Jewish Agency.

However, a long series of unlucky events was destined to frustrate the impetus and the enthusiasm of the young council:

1. Mr. Zvi Herling, the General Secretary, whose ability and dedication had carried the Council from one achievement to another, left his office for a more rewarding position in one of the leading industrial concerns in Israel;

2. The Chairman of the Council, Mr. Eli Ophir, was appointed to a new position outside Beth Shemesh, and was therefore forced to curtail his involvement in the work of the Council;
3. The Deputy Chairman too was compelled to reduce his activity for reasons of family health;
4. Mr. Moshe Arnon, who as coordinator of the project had planned to dedicate most of his time to the Beth Shemesh Council (guidance to the newly appointed secretary and general assistance to fund-raising activities of the Council), while the undersigned took more direct charge of the Netivot Council - fell ill and was compelled to relinquish his position.

In these circumstances the Council was not equipped to cope with the difficulties of the new situation resulting from the discontinuation of the Jewish Agency's financial participation in the projects. As a result, activity decreased gradually; projects already under way were carried on and completed; a number of new plans not requiring financial participation (assistance to the various departments of the Municipality, counselling and guidance to citizens, campaigns for the public library and for the establishment of a number of youth activities, guidance and aid to students in Institutions of Higher Learning etc.) were initiated and regular contact was maintained between the members of the council and with the local authorities.

Despite the considerable reduction in actual operations, and the feeling of frustration of most members, the Council itself as well as the Mayor of Beth-Shemesh, Mr. Amram Luk, and his closest collaborators believe that the Development Council plays an essential role in the life of the town, and that its discontinuation would be a very serious blunder.

At present, feverish consultations are taking place within the Development Council and the Municipality, in preparation for the next General Assembly which will discuss the report of the outgoing Executive, elect its new officials and lay down the policies for 1972-73.

#### C. Netivot

The rapid growth of the Council, already evident in 1970-71, continued and even accelerated this year.

Despite the fact that the proposals and budget submitted to the Executive of the Jewish Agency have not yet been approved (in December 1971 the Council was assigned a lump sum of IL 40,000 for projects and administration - less than 50% of the sum requested), it may be stated with confidence that the Council makes itself felt in all sectors of the town's life and has considerable influence in all government ministries and other institutions involved in the development of Netivot.

In addition to the projects initiated by the Council in previous years, which have already become an indispensable factor in the life of the town (enrichment classes in the Primary Schools, expansion of the public library, summer camps, special projects for retarded children, assistance to youth activities, neighborhood clubs and study groups for adults), the Council has expanded its operations in all sectors of the town's life:

1. Employment - The Council initiated the setting up of a "Chamber of Local Industry" and conducted a census among all local enterprises in order to ascertain the prospects of development and to plan vocational training courses for youth and adults based on an estimate of future needs.

The Council participated in organizing the visits of Mr. L. A. Pincus, Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency, and of Mr. Pinhas Sapir, Minister of Finance, Commerce and Industry and maintains contact with the Director of the Development Towns Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Dan Tichon.

2. Immigration and Absorption - The Development Council, in conjunction with the Municipality, carried out an information campaign on Netivot, its prospects and needs with the purpose of securing the backing of the various ministries involved with directing immigrants (and especially the Ministries of Absorption and of Housing) for the absorption in Netivot of a large contingent of Georgian immigrants.

The Council acted as host to a group of Bnei Akiva youth from England, who intend to settle in Israel before the end of 1973. As a result of the efforts of the Council, the representatives of the group have recently informed the town of their decision to settle in Netivot upon their immigration to Israel.

3. Health - The Council initiated a vigorous campaign involving Kupat Holim, the Ministry of Health and the Municipality, for the improvement of local medical services and of public hygiene; the first achievements are already evident: additional visiting days for medical specialists, improved services in the pharmacy, etc.
4. Cultural activity - The Council organized a number of cultural events for adults, various study and art courses, symposia and seminars for civil servants and so forth.
5. Education - The Development Council in conjunction with the Municipality and the Azata Regional Council (a unique instance of urban-rural cooperation) initiated the establishment of a Child Psychology Clinic within the framework of the Ministry of Education. The clinic opened its doors on September 1, 1971; regrettably, its services had to be discontinued recently upon dismissal of its director; nonetheless, the setting up of the clinic is an outstanding accomplishment for the town as well as for the region.
6. Communal affairs - The "Housewives' Club - Laundry Club", inaugurated officially on January 31, 1972, represents a unique innovation in Israel, both as a service and as an instance of collaboration on the part of its many "partners" - Amidar, the Municipality, the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Council for Demography and the Development Council. Although the financial participation of the Council represents only 10% of the total

investment, the Council played an essential role in this project as its first promoter and as the driving force that made possible its actual realization.

Two other neighborhood clubs were equipped and activated jointly with the Municipality, and a variety of field activities were carried out, in the absence of a regular community worker, by Mr. Haim Shamir, the highly able secretary of the Council.

Several public committees were formed and put into operation, composed of members of the Council, public officials and other personalities, in the main spheres of the life of the town.

The above are but a few examples of the enterprises initiated and inspired by the Development Council. Naturally, most of these projects were put into operation with the aid of budgets provided by government ministries and other agencies, but the initiative, the concern and the driving force of the Council were the main factors responsible for their creation and successful completion.

The Netivot Development Council is now competent to cope with a wide range of local problems; with some additional guidance it may become able to extend its activities beyond the municipal sphere in order to secure assistance, guidance and financing from various ministries and institutions in the country for its projects.

At the same time, in the opinion of the undersigned, the Jewish Agency should not yet withdraw its support but should be prepared to assist the Council by covering its administrative budget (office + secretary) and providing ad hoc financial participation in some of the projects sponsored by the Council.

#### D. Summary

1. In my view, the Development Councils of Beth Shemesh and Netivot can no longer be considered an experimental project; the two Development Councils are in fact working organizations existing on their own merits, although with well-defined and clear-cut jobs - but still requiring a decreasing measure of support.
2. Before taking any decision in regard to the Development Councils, their role and operation, a second survey should be conducted (see Community Development Patterns in Netivot and Beth Shemesh by the Szold Institute, 1969) on lines similar to the first, and perhaps by a different research institute. The purpose of the survey should be the formulation of evaluations and presentation of recommendations relating to the following:
  - (a) The extent of success of the project in the actual areas of activity measured by the improvement of local conditions in the relevant fields in order to evaluate the activity on a local plane and the applicability of the project in other places.

- (b) The extent of success of the project as a community enterprise, measured by its effect in creating nuclei of informal leaders (non-political and non-institutional) in the towns; and by its contribution to the creation of a positive image of the town in the eyes of its inhabitants, in order to evaluate the activity on a local plane and the applicability of the project in other places.
- (c) The ultimate viability of the Councils as a self-supporting organization; eventual recommendations in regard to continued support of the Development Councils for a given period.
- (d) Recommendations in regard to the advisability of establishing Development Councils and their eventual structure and roles in other development towns and perhaps also in other backward urban centres.
- (e) Recommendations in regard to the advisability of setting up a roof organization for the Development Councils, or their affiliation to an existing roof organization dealing with affairs relating to development towns; if there is such organization.

#### E. Comments

1. The survey would obviously require a continuation of the regular functioning of the Development Councils. In order to ensure this the undersigned believes that the Jewish Agency should continue to support the Councils by means of an administrative budget, continued guidance and financial participation in certain specific projects.
2. Continued guidance can only be possible by the establishment of a suitable budgetary and administrative framework for a person to be appointed for this specific task by the Jewish Agency Executive.

*Dov Ancona*

Dov Ancona

Jerusalem  
February 1972.